

TENNESSEE DIPLOMA PROJECT

Tennessee is a part of a national movement to set high expectations for all students. With a focus on student success, Governor Phil Bredesen joined 32 other state leaders in instituting the American Diploma Project, an initiative of the non-profit, bi-partisan organization, Achieve, Inc. The American Diploma Project is founded on the belief that students perform better when expectations are high.

Why did Tennessee join the American Diploma Project Network in 2007?

In Tennessee, we are focused on increasing accountability and aligning our standards with those nationwide. Governor Bredesen has acknowledged that our standards needed improvement, and the TDP will ultimately prepare our students to become productive members of the state's workforce by aligning K-12 standards to skills needed for college and career readiness in the 21st Century.

Renewed focus on college and workforce readiness

In an effort to increase our graduation rate, and number of students entering college, high school standards have been aligned with college and workforce expectations. Teachers will be required to use a college- and work-based curriculum.

Students need college to succeed in today's economy.

According to the "Economic Book of K-16 reform", jobs that require post-secondary education or training will make up more than two-thirds of new jobs in the future. This makes it more important than ever to prepare students for college and a competitive workforce.

What about the new high school graduation requirements?

In addition to higher math, science and language arts standard that are more in line with national standards, Tennessee now has more rigorous graduation requirements.

Students now must earn:

- an additional credit in math
- an additional half credit in health/P.E./wellness,
- an additional half credit in personal finance,
- and three credits specific to the students' planned course of study.

Tennessee is moving swiftly to make a more career-ready, meaningful diploma for Tennessee students. Starting with the 2009-2010 school year, the new standards and graduation requirements will go into effect.

What is the timeline for the changes?

New College and Career-ready standards may go into effect this high school year. However, Students currently in 9th grade or above will not be held responsible for meeting the standards until the 2009-2010 school year.

Tennessee Diploma Project

Background

In January 2007, Tennessee joined the American Diploma Project (ADP) Network:

- Coalition of 30 states dedicated to aligning high school curriculum, standards with the demands of college and work.
- Flagship initiative of Achieve Inc., a bipartisan nonprofit organization that helps states raise academic standards.
- Achieve's major sources of funding include the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, GE Foundation and IBM Corp.

The American Diploma Project Network, launched in 2005 following the National Education Summit on High Schools, calls on states to commit to four key priorities:

- Align high school standards with the demands of college and work.
- Require students to complete a college and work-ready curriculum so that earning a diploma ensures that a student is ready for post-secondary opportunities.
- Build college- and work-ready measures into statewide high school assessment systems.
- Hold high schools and post-secondary institutions accountable for student preparation and success.

Tennessee Diploma Project

With Governor Bredesen's leadership, the Tennessee Diploma Project formed a collaboration of :

- K-12
- Higher Education
- Business
- Community
- Government
- Achieve, Inc.

to improve state high school standards, increase the rigor of our graduation requirements, and ensure that all Tennessee students are ready for college and work.

Recent Meaningful Milestones

September 5, 2007 Governor convened Tennessee Diploma Project Leadership Group at the Capitol for update on progress to date. Key legislators, education stakeholders, business and community leaders attended.

October 25, 2007 Results of National Quality Review I by Achieve, Inc.

Tennessee received high marks on our revision process progress to date and we are on track for an excellent National Quality Review II. Criticisms were minor and the Department of Education's content teams are already at work addressing concerns about coherence and consistency.

November 2, 2007 Revised math/ ELA standards, new high school graduation requirements, and "single path" high school diploma at the State Board of Education pass first reading.

December 21, 2007 Tennessee received a grant from the GE Foundation and Achieve, Inc. to plan for long term Diploma Project sustainability.

Next Steps

January 25, 2008 Following National Quality Review II, second reading of revised math/ELA standards at State Board of Education. Final approval of single path high school diploma. New graduation requirements apply to students graduating Spring of 2013.

January 2008 Roll-out new standards to K-12, higher education and the business communities.

Spring 2008, RFP for new high school assessments will be let in January 2008 pending final review by Governor, Implementation will begin in 2009-2010 school year.

May 2008 and continuing: Professional Development designed to sustain the rigor and relevance of the new standards.

Keys to Success

Strong leadership—government, K-12, higher education and business. leaders working towards the common goal of ensuring that all students are college and work ready.

A sense of urgency, that solving this challenge is critical to Tennessee's ability to compete in a global economy.

Long term commitment to seeing the agenda implemented.